

Sage Intergrity EHR | Success Story

Carraway Internal Medicine Associates

Facing Workflow and Compliance Challenges
Effectively with Sage Intergrity EHR

● CHALLENGE

Upgrade systems to accommodate future growth and meet HIPAA guidelines. Find a system that is flexible and easy to learn.

● SOLUTION

Sage Intergrity offered the most integrated system of all the solutions that were considered. Sage helped develop a staggered implementation program beginning with scanning charts and progressing to clinical task management.

● RESULTS

Eliminated \$600 a month in transcription costs; Saved \$250 a month in charting supplies; Significantly reduced internal storage space; Reallocated staff resources; Increased coding from mostly level 3 to mostly level 4 for one provider.

SPECIALTY

Internal Medicine

LOCATION

Alabama

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS

Two

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

2 Physicians, 5 Staff

SOLUTIONS USED

Sage Intergrity

Sage Intergrity EHR

Searching for a Technology Solution and an Implementation Partner

In 2003, administrator Sharon Pizzato and the physicians at Carraway Internal Medicine Associates were facing a common problem. The practice management software they were using was not going to be upgraded to meet HIPAA standards. The company that supported their system was offering new software at no charge, but it required the purchase of all new hardware. Like many physicians, managing partner Beverly Carraway-Handley, M.D. knew that electronic medical records (EMR) were the future and that any choice they made should include options for further automation.

Carraway Internal Medicine was facing a problem that many small practices have faced in recent years. They needed to upgrade their systems to meet HIPAA guidelines and their small software vendor had been bought out by a larger company that was not going to support that system anymore. As a result, the practice was being forced to either take another system not of their choosing or begin looking for an entirely new solution and vendor.

Sharon Pizzato had a list of features that were important for Carraway Internal Medicine. One major issue was their future growth and the fact that they have residents constantly moving in and out of the practice. They wanted a system that would be easy to learn quickly but robust enough to help them recruit the best possible candidates to the practice. They also wanted a system that would be supported and continue to be developed long into the future so they would never again face the prospect of their systems not being supported.

Integrated Sage Intergrity Platform, Reliable Support are Key to Carraway's Decision

"After looking at about a dozen solutions, we narrowed it down to three," explains Pizzato. "Of those three, Sage Intergrity offered the most integrated system with a flow that we really liked." In addition, Dr. Carraway-Handley felt that Sage would be around for a long time to come and could offer them the ongoing support she was looking for. She also felt it offered the most flexibility in the clinical applications, allowing her to determine how she would create notes and document visits.

With no experience in clinical applications and a new physician joining the practice during the implementation, there were concerns about getting up to speed and being able to use the system to its fullest capacity. "Sage worked with us to develop a staggered implementation," recalls Dr. Carraway-Handley. "We started by scanning all of our charts, which took about four months, and then we began adding other components like electronic prescriptions and clinical task management."

Cost and time savings were realized immediately from scanning the charts. "We were spending about \$250 a month just in new chart supplies, which has been eliminated now as has most of our storage space. We just have a small room with charts that we have to keep, but no one ever really goes in there, except to get things like Christmas decorations!"

Streamlining Workflows with Electronic Chart Access

For Donna Fico, M.D., the latest addition to the practice, being able to have all the patient information at her fingertips is the best part of Sage Intergy. "Having the chart in one place has so many advantages," she says. "When you need to look something up, it's right there. This is especially beneficial when you aren't in the practice and you are at the satellite clinic or at home. There is no need to carry charts or have things copied and faxed over. It's almost impossible with paper charts to have that kind of access to information."

Using Sage Intergy EHR Encounter Note Improves Efficiency and Accuracy of Charge Capture

Documenting patient care with the encounter note tools has also resulted in a wide array of benefits. With 97% of patient encounters taking place in the practice, streamlining that process makes a big difference in overall workflow and efficiency not to mention transcription costs. Since beginning electronic encounter documentation, the practice has been able to shift staff resources to use them more effectively, they are saving \$600 a month in transcription costs and their coding has really improved. "The charge capture piece is great," says Dr. Carraway-Handley. "It's nice to be able to see when I haven't entered charges. That may only be three patients a month that we miss charges on, but the system catches it and I get a task and I finish the encounter and close it. Things just don't get missed. And, the overall level of coding has certainly gone up. I was all level three before and now am almost all level four." Pizzato agrees that charge capture is improving because the electronic documentation is more complete and accurate.

Customizable Templates Match Each Provider's Workflow

The flexibility of the system and the ability to create templates and favorites has helped to speed everyday tasks from the encounter itself to prescriptions and soon lab test requests. "We had very savvy trainers who watched our workflow and then worked with us to create encounter templates and favorites and figure out how to organize patient information in the system," recalls Dr. Carraway-Handley. "Since then, we have gotten better at using the software and understanding our own needs, and because the system is so flexible, we have been able to make changes to meet those needs."

As the physicians continue to learn how to improve their use of the system, they are getting ready to grow their practice further. Dr.

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– Dr. Beverly Carraway-Handley
Carraway Internal Medicine Associates

Carraway-Handley would like to add another two providers in 2008. "One of the things that is so great about Sage Intergy is that anyone can learn to use it and fit into their personal style," she says. "Currently, we have residents coming in and learning it, and we have already seen how easy it is for them to jump in and use it and make it work for their flow."

Building Relationships for Better Care

At Carraway Internal Medicine, their business is about relationships and they understand that every patient and every situation is different. With Sage Intergy they found a system that addresses common medical practice issues like meeting HIPAA guidelines and improving coding while providing the flexibility to be used by physicians who are vastly different in styles and who see each patient as a new unique challenge. "We are a lot about personality and personal interaction and it makes our practice more complicated at times, which is challenging when trying to set up a system to meet your needs," says Dr. Carraway-Handley. "But, I believe we made the right choice to support our patients, which is the most important thing."